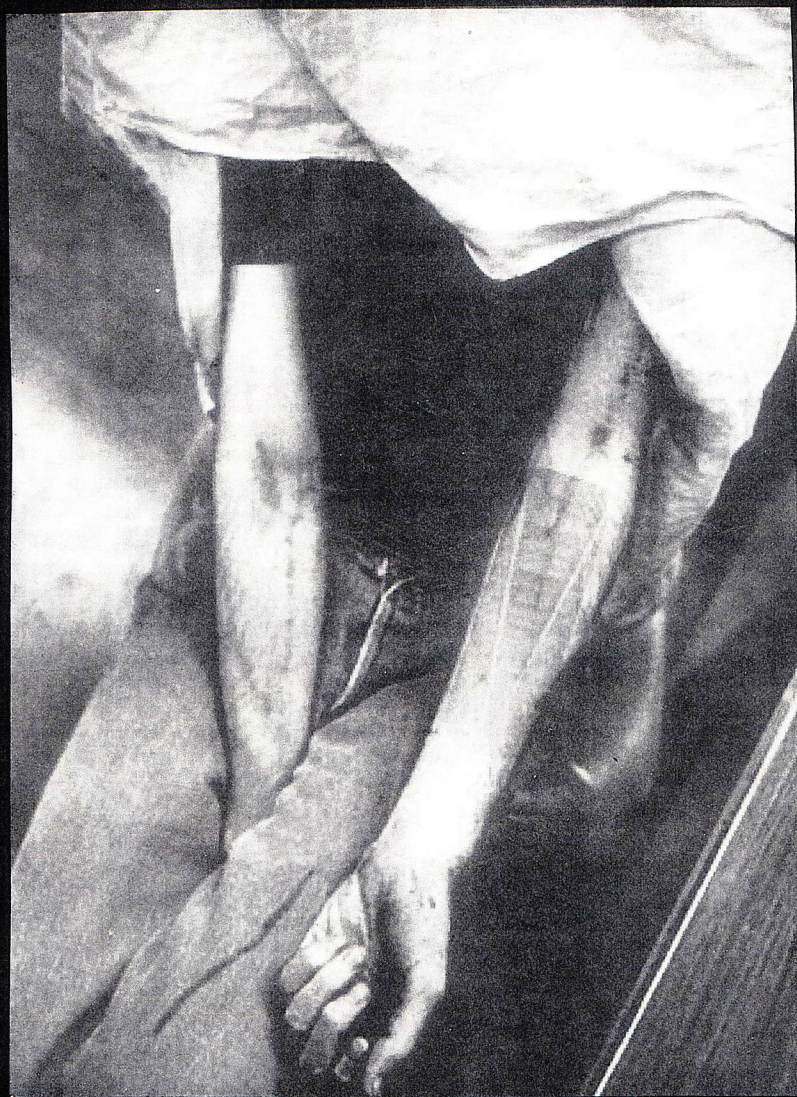


# Track Marks





## From The Editors

Trains and railroad tracks often elicit a response from the poetically minded. They draw a certain sort who might find themselves on trains unsure of their real destination or walking on the tracks likewise unsure of their real destination. One might find themselves disappearing into a contemplative haze at the far off holler of the freight train. There may be memories of putting coins on the tracks to later collect them all flattened out by the force of one of the most timeless and powerful vehicles created by man. This zine is our collaboration of inspired works in regard or in mention of trains and their tracks. May it inspire walks on the tracks and immortal conversations.

Kevin Hovey

[Thecoloroftheskyisgreentoday@yahoo.com](mailto:Thecoloroftheskyisgreentoday@yahoo.com)

Trains have always represented a synthesis of intrigue and adventure for me. Being drawn to secluded places, I find peace of mind around these monolithic symbols of a by-gone era. Although trains harbor many obsolete attributes, they also serve to strike a chord with our future by harkening back to a simpler time for travel. I believe the trains of our past are allowing us to board and advance to our future, constantly! I hope these reflections on trains help provoke similar feelings of fanaticism for a forgotten and ethereal branch of our history.

Josh Villaire

[Radialfloral@yahoo.com](mailto:Radialfloral@yahoo.com)

I'm sick of trains!

Seriously.

Miranda Wieck

[Mandy\\_wieck@yahoo.com](mailto:Mandy_wieck@yahoo.com)







Insomniac's Reverie

Matt Simpson Siegel

It's 4:41 A.M. and I don't know where my dorm is,  
Sleep won't come until the sun  
And I'm out of Nyquil.

The night seems clean,

Unpolluted by people or rackety winter-beater  
hatchbacks

Accented by a navy clear sky,

Orange tinged crescent moon,

And faded stars-remnants formed from other nights.

Folk singer-sirens and dirt floor poets perform in memory

As I walk along ruddy rusted railroad tracks,

Telephone poles, cornstalk rows, and

Yellow road lines aligning my lazy left eye--

It does that when I'm tired.

So far from home

-if I sit I'll be asleep

-if I walk back I'll be awake

-if I go further I'll be lost

-if I smoke I'll be out

-out of cigarettes to abide my time tomorrow, wasted on sleep.



Mike Roy

Katrina

I'd been back New Orleans since mid-October. Had a place to stay, for a while anyway, down in the Bywater on Burgundy (at Montegut)-just across the tracks. People were gutting out their houses, dumping debris onto fast growing piles along the railroad right of way, while an endless line of FEMA trailers on flatbed cars kept rolling by:

the wind combing through those piles of garbage would blow through our house, choking us with raspy dust. My eye sockets were swollen, oozing watery puss, partly from this cheap, oil-based clown makeup I'd been using to paint my face for street performing, but mostly due to all the heavy metals and black mold blowing in the breeze, according to the holistic nurse at the free clinic in the park. This kindly soul mixed me an eyewash of eyebright & chamomile and sent me on my way, reminding me to return the next day. I wandered a few feet toward the free kitchen provided by the Rainbow Family of Living Light (they were feeding us better than any Govt. agency!)

hoping dinner would be ready soon. It was almost dark. I sat on the grass. That's when she strode up in her bowler hat-

"What's YER name?"

"Magic. You?"

"Katrina"

"Too wild"

"I am"

"Got people here?"

"I came for the lawless atmosphere"



It was almost Thanksgiving. While evacuees in Houston, Austin, Salt Lake(?) and countless other infinitely less interesting towns were lamenting the lack of decent housing to come home to, a kind of underground railroad in reverse began streaming artists, musicians, street performers-Fringe Types of all stripes (myself among them) into the devastated city. Many of these folks had never been to New Orleans before, but all the right ingredients were here, and those used to living in pickups, tents and boxcars don't need no fancy house with runnin' water to call a place home. Katrina rode the train in from Montana. A frayed black tuxedo jacket, banjo & brindle pit bull was all she had for comfort, and a lacey, thick-lined tattoo meandered around the lower half of her face-A Moku-"It's my beard," she said

We hit it off right away. She with her banjo & me looking for someone to busk with on the street. I grabbed my drum-a dumbek- and soon we were sitting on the cold black sidewalk lining the east edge of Decatur St, across from the French Market. I'd written a couple of songs; we started out with "9th Ward Shuffle", playing for food, drinks, tips, whatever people gave us.

"Been busted down in Houston  
Drinkin' wine without my friends  
I been thinkin' bout New Orleans  
Walkin' home in these size tens..."

We were so happy to be here. Floating in a toxic stew notwithstanding, we could feel the collective yearning of the dispossessed to return home hanging heavy in the moldy air. At least we were in New Orleans. A couple of MP's drove up the street in a Humvee, their automatic weapons visible through



the open windows. These guys, probably just back from combat in Iraq, could only shake their heads at this bum show. I couldn't help myself and called out- "whadya expect, 'The Rose of Castile?'"

Police from agencies all over the country had been brought in to baby-sit as well. They just stood in groups of 3 or 4 at busy intersections, grinning stupidly. This was a glimpse of anarchy in the US and we loved it. We'd been waiting for it.

Katrina softly picked her banjo; I sang & kept a beat on drum. Beer, whiskey, vodka, gin, restaurant leftovers, loose change & dollar bills all began to flow by like the Mississippi river across the street...

"How long you be in town, Katrina?"

"A while, 'till spring anyway. Gonna catch a train up to Alaska for the summer."

"Yer a lifer, huh?"

"till I die"

She bore an air of innocence and poise that dirt and tattoos could not hide, like she might have been valedictorian of her high school class or something...

"I was!"

"Truly?"

"Yeah. I was a straight A student till I got expelled 10 days before graduation."

"Why?"

"Drugs."

I didn't ask any more. This was only common courtesy in a town where whiskey & coffee are both morning eye openers and vials of cocaine stand next to the Advil on countless nighttables. After a while she went on, loose from the gin we'd been passin' around-



"Yeah, my brother was cookin' meth in a trailer an' I'd sling it for him all over the county in Montana where we lived. He wound up with a bad batch this one time an' I sold some to my best friend: she died from it.

"Is that when you hit the road?"

"Soon after."

"Your front teeth look okay."

"I got meth mouth bad. All my molars are crumbling right down to the roots..."

"Let's try this one. I just wrote it. We launched into "Toilet Bowl Gumbo"

"Goin' up to Walmart, get some candy for the kids  
Throw a brick right through the window  
While we listen to the wind blow  
Yeah it's 95 degrees when the tide breaks down the le-

vees"

Magically we had drawn a Cajun fiddler who was jamming exquisitely around our lyrics-

"Smell 'dat spicy brown roux, bubblin up down from de sewers

Watch de' water start to rise

While we steal some Hubig's pies

Makin' toilet bowl gumbo outta everything in town"

We sang the refrain over and over again. Drunken strangers walking by joined arms, stomping a two step around the sidewalk-

"Have a plate up in the attic, while we watch poor Grandma drown

"She's in the toilet bowl Gumbo, just like everything in town..."



We must have played that song for a half hour. It was after midnight. I was getting sentimental, on the verge of slurring my words. The drinks kept coming, handed down to us out of the crazy farrago passing by.

Finally I spilled it out-"I wish you'd get your teeth fixed Katrina. Those abscesses will get more and more painful and eventually kill you!"

"I know. That's what I'm living for. I vowed on my friend's grave after she died that I would never, EVER fix my teeth!

### Deliverance

By: Steve O'Connor

Glimmering in the undertow,  
wallowing in an afterglow  
a hobo stands on the precipice  
With nary a dime to his name  
and no dreams in mind,  
he descends the steep hillside  
to the rusted steel tracks below  
promising deliverance  
from his fabricated hell.





## 160,000 School Children

The taxes of America's railroads are paying for the schooling of 160,000 children throughout the nation.

Yet less than a third of the railroads' taxes go to education. The bulk of the million tax dollars they pay daily goes to help support our courts and legislatures, our police and public health, even good roads, and other functions of federal, state and local government.

No wonder thoughtful citizens want our railroads to earn a living.

Common-sense treatment will assure the railroads their chance to live and earn.

For additional  
copies of Every-  
man's Almanac  
apply to Michi-  
gan Railroads  
Association,  
Prudden Bldg.,  
Lansing, Mich.

It consists of regarding them as a private business, with the right to adjust their rates, services and expenses to competitive and changing economic conditions, and putting them on a regulation and tax equality with all other forms of transportation.

## MICHIGAN RAILROADS ASSOCIATION

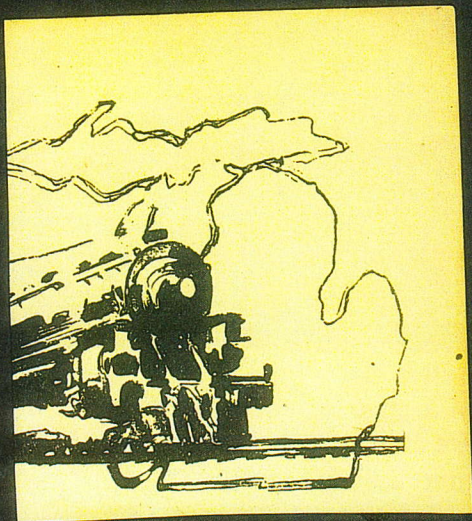
*We Serve Michigan*



Zachary Brennan  
The Greatest Love on Earth

My love for you is like,  
Like a Circus! A great big circus.  
It comes in like thunder on a train painted in vibrant colors.  
When I see your face my heart feels like  
a giant tent! Filled with extraordinary acts.  
Scantily clad women and children swinging from those-those  
things!  
Ariel-acrobats performing stunts of great danger with no net  
-just for you.  
And there's clowns. Lot's of fucking clowns. All in a tiny car  
that is...  
umm nothing. I forgot.  
But there is always so much excitement! It's truly awesome.  
The ringleader is dressed in a red-passionate-coat and a top hat.  
Oh, what a top hat indeed.  
Wild animals from around the world.  
Some that frighten and some that are scary.  
Like crocodiles in elephant suits and bears \*ROAR\*.  
It's a spectacular, macktacular spectacle!  
It goes on for three nights in a row.  
Bringing crowds of people to be amazed by the lion tamer and  
stuff.  
And when it is all done,  
they pack up the tents and bring that crazy circus train  
to a brand new town!



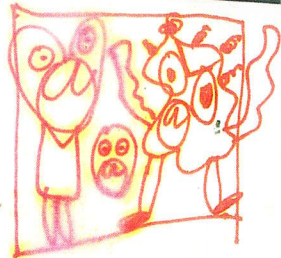
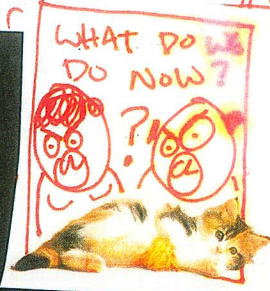
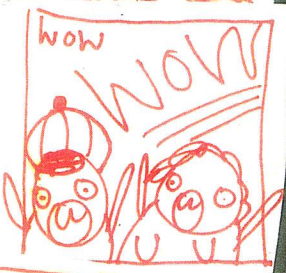
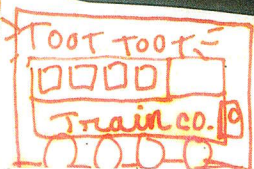


Brent Braspenninx

Switching tracks again  
Intermittent time travel  
Somewhat reminiscent of Walter Mitty  
More steam!!! Double indemnity!!  
Take the axe to the caboose!!  
Another plank thrown into the furnace  
Boiler pressure approaching critical.  
Illegal Ivy League riders' faces  
Scraping jealously against  
Fast moving steel rails  
Blood and spongy connective tissue  
Fuse together with the pounding  
Of one golden spike



BY SARAH  
 TRAIN  
 UNDERTRAIN  
 www constantly  
 adventure time  
 .com  
 Adventure time





Josh Villaire

## The Black Cat

Yanking the leaves and shredding the text from the mouth of a distant winter's mad diary, I remember constructing such wild fantasy in lieu of acknowledging the tragic state of my unhappiness. I was trying to exemplify the image of the starving artist I had caught in snippets of conversation. I perceived myself as a tall and elegant philosopher shrouded in a furl of smoke, like on the cover of a pulp fiction novel. It was in a spiral notebook that I would fabricate my life, which was really rather bleak and cold, but of course everything looks better on paper.

These were the days I would sit concealed in the woods, behind the prop that was Vinyl Solution. Vinyl Solution was a well-frequented record shop filled with pitiful kids like me with too much time on their hands.

I had found a really good lookout there, under the highway. From my perch, I could view a set of train tracks leading out of town. In my loneliness, I would write vapid tales of lust and wait for my fellow delinquents, skipping school, to pass me by. Along with hoping that one of them would see me and realize what a tortured genius I was for writing under an over-pass instead of attending classes, I was plagued by a nagging feeling that something utterly fantastic was bound to come strutting from around the corner to invade my rather listless life.

For the most part, it was only the scamps asking for money or allowing me to inhale their marijuana-stuffed cigars, then demanding that I buy their shit. Except for the rather

impressive art that they would occasionally create from spray-cans, nothing piqued my interest. My heart was sinking, causing me to come back every day with less resilience and anticipation as the day before. Finally, lo and behold, I was blessed with a slight break in this monotonous routine!

It was an awfully overcast day and I was in one of my fits of anguish over writing. I was staring in disgust at an empty page, asking myself if Kerouac had ever had such self-loathing, when



I happened to glance down at the tracks. A stray cat, with an entirely black and matted coat, sat with his back to me, between the rusted rails. I was immediately smitten by his total disinterest to his surroundings. His eyes were hidden and turned away towards something to the south of us.

Trying not to make a sound, I crept down past the strewn-about glass shards and used condoms that littered the ramp. I tiptoed to a place somewhere behind the cat. He appeared to be crouched and very attentively observing a cloud that had touched the ground. A mist was completely shrouding everything that lay ahead of us.

Immediately, a very disconcerting feeling overwhelmed me. Swiftly following this rapid change in my emotions, the cat darted into the abyss. I was left alone, with eyes glued to his place of departure.

I became aware of a low hissing coming from inside the cloud. It was gradually building in intensity, until I felt it rushing down from almost every direction. My very sight started to catch fire and I cupped my ears to keep from screaming, but it remained ringing throughout my skull. I was pretty sure at this point that my mind was where the sound had originated. I fell down on my knees and chanted lines from 'Howl' to expel this breach in my sanity, but to no avail. Then, as suddenly as my

noisy possession had seized me, it halted. The air seemed still and I could see from the slits of my watering eyes the shape of a person, apparently drunk and naked from the waist up. Once my vision cleared, I could see that it was a fifteen-year-old girl. Her eyes were glossy and she was surrounded by the laughter of the young boys around her. She came up to me and tried to fix her eyes on something in my face. Her chest seemed to be bruised, with small nipples, like those of a boy.

I felt like I was seeing a girl from a dream I had had before. She had very parched lips that opened slowly as she said, "I think I took too much..."

Since then, I've never seen the black cat again.



Kevin Hovey

## Train track jazz

The tracks north of town  
lead out-

infinite and desolate.  
quiet.

passing over  
creeks and farmlands  
a solid and indestructible path,  
a steel and stony road.

I have trod these tracks  
a thousand times.  
I have danced on these tracks  
in the middle of the night  
through a million fireflies.

In the heat of summer's day  
these tracks have felt  
my dropped sweat.

In a field of alfalfa  
with stars and moon above  
her and I writhed in love  
as a freight train roared and  
rumbled by.

Through the rain and snow  
and through the years  
I have cursed the Devil on these tracks  
I've cursed at Jesus too.

These tracks are my constant-  
my terra firma.  
These tracks,  
These tracks,  
I, a silhouette at dusk.

## LOCOMOTIVES RECOMMENDED TO REPLACE HORSES

The Engineer's report dated May 20, 1833, accompanying the Act to incorporate the Clinton and Vicksburg Railroad Company stated:

"It is recommended that after the completion of the road, the use of horses be dispensed with, and locomotive engines introduced in their stead.

"It is believed that the useful effect of the latter is much greater, at the same expense, than that of the former.

"Indeed, the construction of locomotive engines has now become a distinct business; and we may expect both improvements in their construction, and reduction in their costs.

"The proposed railroad should consequently be made with sufficient firmness to receive this kind of motive power.

"This circumstance has been kept in view in the above calculation of cost."

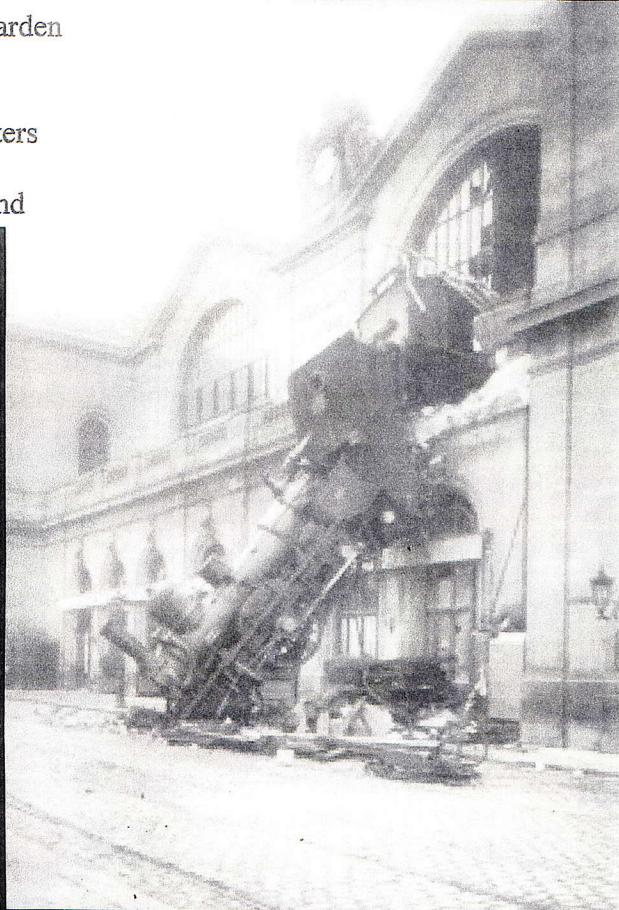
In 1938, 272 locomotives were built for use on American Railroads.

Modern track for heavy traffic is maintained in condition to carry locomotives weighing in excess of 200 tons each.



I see you there  
With your arms  
wrapped around my sisters  
clutching your valuable treasure  
As if you're Mephisto  
And you've just won their souls  
You make them into your Mary Magdalene  
Your Joan of Arc  
Your Guinevere  
As you rob their train of thought  
Like Jesse James  
On a suicide mission  
And the whole world wants you  
more dead than alive  
but being unable  
to expel you from the garden  
we see you there  
with your arms  
wrapped around our sisters  
squeezing ever tighter  
as time marches to its end

Miranda Wieck





### TRAIN STOPS

Train stops are expensive.

The cost of making a train stop depends on varying factors—locomotives—number of cars—number of tons—speed—level, rising and descending grade—cost of fuel—water and wages—weather, etc.

To bring to a stop a train of a 2-10-4 locomotive with 80 ton cars weighing 6,450 tons on level track from a speed of 45 miles per hour costs \$2.08.

A 6 minute stop costs 29 cents more.

To start the train and regain the speed of 45 miles per hour costs still more.

Michaelleen Kelly

### Ticket to Ride

A train went by last night  
Its distant plaintive whistle  
Punctuating the reverential silence  
Of the black city night  
Like a church organ's bellows  
Sounding "Come"  
Inviting me to grab my grip  
And get going  
To glimpse the transcendence  
That comes from leaving, letting go  
And lurching forward.

This train ride wouldn't bring about the kind of changes  
That come from arrogantly brushing up against divinity  
From being passively projected through the skies  
Weightless, airless, soulless.

I'd experience the surge that comes from starting over  
From leaving behind irreversible decisions, •  
Unretractable remarks, intransigent yet irreplaceable lovers.  
From leave-taking that's grounded, grinding,  
Weighty, embodied, rhythmically undulating,  
Panoramic – panascopic – pantheistic  
I'm going, going, gone.

Untitled

Erin Stewart

My morning is greeted by coldness  
And cutting wind  
While my awareness drizzles  
In the rollercoaster kind of way.

I step on an electric train  
Romanticizing steam  
That could puff through the air  
Like magic warm waves.

The driving rain comes tumbling down,  
Landing on the window  
Which outlooks the grey skies-  
The sun has not yet risen.  
As the train grows faster  
And the tracks clack under the weight-  
The little beads run down to the ground  
Like we do.

I wish I could have stayed inside,  
To wake to a gentle day.  
But alas, I'm here in winter, the harshness  
Of reality sets in.  
There is not dream land,  
Only dreams  
Which fail to bring us away.



"We follow the taillights out of the city

moving in a river of red

as the colors fade away from the dusky sunset

we roll for the darkness ahead"

-New Model Army: Vagabonds

Timestamp: East Lansing, Michigan November 4 2003 6:40 PM

The start of my journey towards an experience that I hope will live up to long-held expectations. During late summer of 1987, Robin, a former friend of mine introduced me to the music and evocative lyrics of Justin Sullivan, which has captivated my attention and passion like no other- the name of the band he fronts: New Model Army. I board a bus headed to Toledo Ohio and am it's only passenger. Upon our exiting the lot, I asked the driver- "how many stops between here and Toledo?"- "three" was his reply. Exhaling a sigh of relief, punctuated by the sonic backdrop of jazz, I settle down for the journey and begin reading one of my books.

Timestamp: Toledo, Ohio November 4 2003 10:30 PM

Ice-cold one liter bottle of water dappling my hand with moisture, I sit of the train station's waiting area art deco inspired furniture. With twenty minutes to spare, I arrive in time to make my connection and the first travel leg to see my favorite band perform live, is complete. Now I only have the second phase of my travels ahead of me- thirteen hours via train to Washington DC. Electrified with anticipation of seeing- not only my favorite band play, but also my friend Mike, who I had not seen in slightly over two years. As I sit waiting for my train's arrival, I ceaselessly write set lists of songs I want NMA to play. The day has finally arrived- just over 24 hours left until I will be hearing Justin Sullivan strum his guitar and sing, live, before hundreds of his faithful fans. This train excursion is my portal to my dream, a dream of seeing my favorite band play.



My train, gleaming as a silver bullet enters my sightline. I can feel the nervous energy emanating from my fellow travelers increase, all of whom are waiting for the boarding call that just sounded over the crackling speakers. Raising myself off my perch, suitcase in hand I join the line to board our train waiting on the tracks outside the closed doors. With a beatific smile and outstretched hand, the salt and pepper haired train conductor receives my ticket, examines it and clearing me to board the train, returns the ticket stub to me. It is now five minutes after eleven PM and I have selected a seat and quickly placed it into full recline mode. I can feel my excitement increasing over seeing my favorite singer-songwriter, Justin Sullivan perform.

Timestamp: Somewhere in the Blue Ridge Mountains 7:30 AM  
November 5 2003

Daylight is breaking, casting shadows among the trees stretching from the trackside ground. I have been awake for our passage through two tunnels thus far, alternately darkening my world before bathing it with stark sunlight. To my right, a river meanders cutting a swath of varying widths through the mountainside and to my left, densely packed foliage and rock outcroppings. About four and a half hours ago, we were in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Yet still, with this beautiful countryside I wonder where I am now. Only five hours left until our scheduled arrival in Washington DC and my anticipation is growing steadily.



## 'A Long Walk to Walden'

Here I am on the train tracks at 2:00 am. I graduated three weeks ago at the age of seventeen. Night before last, I declared my freedom, left the nest of my conservatively oppressive parents and flew the coup. Tonight is a dark, only a little moonshine through the clouds. This is my walk back to a small tarp covered tent that I now call my home. From this small Michigan town, the railroad tracks lead north into farmland and wilderness. About three miles out on a little hill with some trees and bushes there lies a hammock, tent, clothes, food, my sleeping bag and CD player.

To my left is a field submerged in fog and to the right a cornfield buried likewise. The tracks rise out of the fog and into the shadows ahead. Lack of sleep, caffeine pills, and the particularly morbid and lonesome night has put my nerves on edge. I hum Tambourine Man to calm myself. In my right hand I grip my knife for protection against the deranged drunken redneck or hobo who awaits me in the dark. I drink from my canteen, my feet crunching on the rocks as I march ahead. I am thinking how stupid it is to be afraid of the dark. When you are completely alone you can argue about why or why not to be afraid, but fear, like any emotion, can be an inescapable thing. In the eerie mix of silence and cricket chirping, there comes a slight rustling noise from the field. I stop and my pulse quickens. It was a big rustle like the kind a man might make. "Hey.... Hello?" I say. An explosion of noise, like that of a

waterfall, bursts forth from the hidden field and assumes my direction.

I feel the thrill of immanent death. Here is where it ends. I am about to be consumed by demons all alone, miles from town and at the age of seventeen. Never has blood pulsed through my body harder. Never have I heard such a racket in the dark headed towards me.

The noises near me. I see the mist swirl. I see beasts leaping. Out of the fog, over the tracks one beast emerges, then another and another and then many more. Involuntarily, I fall to my knees and stare as the enormous herd of deer make their way over the tracks and back into the murky night. I had roused the



herd from their beds. After I retrieve my breath, I find myself chuckling. It is such a silly thing to be afraid of the night, even a shrouded lonely night. I rise and walk on.

The moon peers through a hole in the clouds and a lone firefly floats by. The night is not so morose as I had thought; rather it is sublime and haunting. I hear the howl of a train and see its light coming around the far off bend. The freight train is a beast I have already made my peace with. I wave hello at a conductor I imagine behind the blinding light. I step a few feet aside. Rumbling vibrations travel through the rocks and up my legs. The moment that it begins to pass, the train's long howl pierces my inner being, warning me of its strength as it whips up wind, creaking and clanging, spitting out stones from beneath its mighty wheels. My hair is thrown by the generated wind, and I squint as dust is stirred into my face. It is a long train, and I resume my walking before it completely passes. It charges away with its red tail light aglow, and its rickety

presence rounds another bend and evanesces into the distance with a final bellowing howl.

I climb the little hill to where my humble abode is. By the guidance of a small flashlight, I duck through the trees and unzip the door to find the welcomed sight of the sleeping bag, my nightly destination. Once nestled, I sigh and consider my position. I am quite satisfied. This summer will be different. As I rest my head on an old, rolled up sweater I dream of the nights to come, I dream of the deer laying down to sleep, I dream of the freight train barreling southbound through the dark. I hear the faint barking of the coyotes.



David Landrum

Trains of Trust

What did Laura Nyro mean when she wrote

There'll be trains of blossoms  
There'll be trains of music  
There'll be trains of trust  
Trains of golden dust  
Sweet trains of thought

in the song "Stoned Soul Picnic"?

She lived years and years

with an adult partner named Maria Desiderio,

wrote songs for Peter Paul and Mary,

Three Dog Night, Blood, Sweat & Tears,

Barbara Streisand, The Fifth Dimension,

wrote in the sixties when most of the trains

that rolled across America were munitions trains

loaded with white phosphorous and napalm

to burn and blind, troop trains transferring soldiers,

not only for duty overseas in Vietnam, but for duty

in the Watts riots in LA and the race riots in Detroit

where black and white fought it out in the streets

with shotguns, teargas, and machine guns,

and in every other city across America.

She wrote when the Freedom Riders took

buses and trains from the North to places



like Little Rock, Arkansas, and Selma, Alabama,  
and tried to segregate places that said White Only.  
She wrote that song when only thirty years earlier  
trains carried the displaced, the hobo,  
the homeless and broke and busted  
to what they hoped would be a new start out west  
where there was no dust bowl and the weather  
always warm. She wrote when little train cars  
carried nuclear bombs into huge underground silos  
where our missiles were pointed at Russia.  
Over the two oceans, East and West, their missiles  
were pointed at us as well, delivered on rails  
guarded by soldiers with red stars on their hats.  
Maybe there were already trains of music  
and maybe even trains of blossoms,

but if there were we never saw them or heard or smelled  
their fragrance. We needed to stand on the granite gravel  
that lines railroad beds, stand next to  
those tar-soaked ties that British call "sleepers"  
and see a train of trust come by, needed to feel its rumbling  
like a cosmic Om shake our souls back  
to where they should have been. Because no one trusted  
anyone.



"Trains of trust" sounded as beautiful as blossoms or music  
or golden dust or sweet thought.

Over the converging rails, at the point where parallel lines  
meet,

that trust lurked and blossomed but never came.

Now the golden dust of pollen dropped by bees settles

over Laura Nyro, dead in her grave at age forty-nine,

victim of ovarian cancer. Cat Stevens wrote about the Peace  
Train.

It still has not come. The peace train holy rollers have

just about lost their faith. And by the time the Fabulous O'Jays

invited people all over the world to join hands and form a love  
train,

more and more people all over the world died as the trains of  
trust

faded from every nation, from each religion, from all groups

whatever their mode of differentiation from others.

Maybe we should surrey down to a stoned soul picnic,

Maybe we should all get stoned and scan the horizon

not for assassins, armies, suicide bombers, but for a train of  
trust.

Maybe.

I doubt if it would do any good.



Josh Villaire  
Emigra

Fischer was convinced that he hadn't become the manager of a world famous restaurant franchise by chance, and he hadn't the time to be provoked and chided by anyone. His telephone conversations consisted of heated bouts of screaming where he would hurl abuses on the recipient at a nightmarish pace. He would swear threats of violence on a particular transporter's wife and children if he were late on delivery. He would writhe and froth at the mouth if anyone called regarding a miscalculated purchase that he had a hand in. Outside his small office, the employees either hated or envied him. Whatever the sentiment, it was an abomination to find fault in any of Fischer's actions. Fischer was a man of power.

On this particular morning, Fischer nervously balanced his bulk in a black rotating office chair. He lugged his disproportionate mass of flesh back and forth, between the IBM and the glass pane that over-looked the inferior cluster of employees that labored beneath him. He was particularly nervous as he stared down at the name 'Ramirez, Caesar' on his hired help list. In vain, he couldn't remember when or why he had hired another 'illegal'.

Stationed in Guadalajara, a small town in Mexico, the Ramirez clan was experiencing a drought of career prospects. In desperation, the mother and father sent their eldest boy, Caesar, to find a man named Gato. He would help Caesar flee from Guadalajara to the United States, where he would secure a position. Upon his arrival, Caesar was expected to deliver

half of his wages to his family in order to aid their survival. He would stay with a man named Martinez, who knew Caesar's father. Martinez was said to live in a small city somewhere in the state of Michigan.

After numerous escapades and close calls, Caesar was now well concealed in the back of a truck, heading down the highway at a tremendous speed. Periodically peering from behind a sheet of canvas, Caesar was attacked by a barrage of imagery that left him drowsy and confused. They had passed a multitude of billboards with unfamiliar faces that gazed down at him from above, their lips adorned in drooping cigarettes, and their bodies encased in fashionable clothing. There were also scores of churches, each lit up by its own towering, electric crucifix. The driver yelled back something about their arrival in Michigan. Caesar wished to ask the driver what time it was, but remembered his promise to stay silent until they had reached their destination.



It was long after nightfall when Caesar met Señor Martinez and became a guest in his home. Señor Martinez immediately informed Caesar that his health was declining, and if Caesar wished to live and break bread with him, he needed to work. Fortunately for Caesar, Martinez had a job at a local restaurant. Martinez described his position with infinite pride, promising Caesar work within the next day or so. Until then, he instructed Caesar in basic English. Caesar wished to make a good impression on Martinez, and insisted that he'd clean and cook for him. It wasn't long before Caesar was assigned some temporary work at his restaurant.

Grateful for work, Caesar put down his broom behind the dumpster of the McDonalds parking lot. Today he had been paired with Steve to clean all of the scattered waste and leakage that ran off from the dumpsite. Caesar hadn't allowed himself the privilege of defecating or using the bathroom facilities for the last ten hours, and this steaming pile resembled how he felt deep within his bowels. The parking lot that they were expected to clean was deserted, which left Steve and Caesar with the opportunity to relieve their tension, but only to a very minor degree. Even now, the watchful eye of the security camera made Caesar aware of his limited autonomy. When he moved about, he felt every pore of his body scrutinized and divided into vigorous portions as if he were on exhibit at a slaughterhouse.

"This job is fucking sick! I can't believe I still work here!", Steve groaned.

Caesar smiled at Steve, covering up his confusion. He was uncertain over what Steve was complaining about. He still knew very little English.

\*\*\*\*\*

The sign with the yellow 'M' scowled down from above, as the sun fell behind synthetic rocks; enclosing all patrons in the gloom of an apprehensive fortress of plastic. At nighttime in America, on this concrete strip of commerce, no sign of nature could be distinguished from the unending torrent of motor vehicles. Cars, trucks, and swelling buses of every fashion careened back and forth at outlandish speed, seeming fanatically confident of their invisible destination.



Señor Martinez struggled in vain trying to relax himself in the employee lounge. Martinez was a man who relied on conversation to ease his stress in the work place.

Unfortunately, no one had any interest in learning Spanish and engaging Martinez in a worthwhile chat. He had been idly observing Caesar through a frayed curtain in the lounge; when he suddenly realized that this was the third day in a row the boy had turned down the option of a break. Martinez put down his bag of pretzels; disengaging his frail body from its painful position in a shoddy chair. He then exited the building through the side, and met Caesar from behind. Caesar was on his hands and knees with a rag and some chemicals, trying to make the playground equipment sanitary. He was still working with an air of self-assurance as Martinez placed his small hand on Caesar's shoulder; drawing the boy close to him.

"Take a break, my friend; they can't dismiss you for that."

Caesar consented to leave off work (only because he urgently needed to use the facilities). He dashed inside, seizing the employee bathroom key from off the nail. After some difficulty with the door, Caesar came into the tiny room and sat down. Pleased with the brief opportunity for peace, Caesar gazed vacantly at the gaudy designs and product placement that decorated the walls. There was an arrangement of diverse food items drawn to represent all the ethnicities of the world. They were smiling and united by all their hands.

"Hello? Is somebody sleeping in there? The door is locked on this side! Hello? Hello? HELLO! WAKE UP!"

Caesar was thrown from his slumber by a woman's voice shouting at him from behind the door. Apparently he had fallen asleep in a sit-down position on the toilet, and a woman and her child on the other side were in dire need of its use. Caesar hastily began pulling bathroom tissue from out of a silver dispenser. This proved to be a complex task, for the reason that every time he yanked the paper it split off, producing absurdly small, impracticable portions. He tried to stand up, but noticed that the floor was considerably more soaked with water than it had been previously. He found himself continually losing his balance, and forced to scuttle on his hands to the source of the crying infants voice. The woman was banging on the door and cursing by the time Caesar could finally reach it. He tried twisting the handle to allow her entry, but his hands were wet, and the handle appeared to be broken.



"What the hell are you doing?", she shrieked, "Let me in, I have a baby, asshole!"

Caesar suddenly felt that he was faced with the unfortunate dilemma of either bawling out for someone to rescue him, (which wouldn't do much good in Spanish) or battering back at the woman behind the door with his fists. Her scolding had become incessant, and it was becoming very difficult for Caesar to think at this point. As if in a trance, the scanty tile job on the ceiling suddenly caught his attention. Most of the tiles were misplaced or stained; except for the one directly above his head. Absent-mindedly, Caesar reached for the tile, and lifted it up to see into the dark cavity of the ceiling. Amid the woman and her brat's continual blubbering, he found some napkins and a partial cigarette, which he resigned himself to smoke as if it were his last. Just as he was prepared to light up,

the door was thrown open, toppling Caesar with a violent jolt. He remained sprawled out on the floor, as a figure loomed over him in a defiant stance. To Caesar's surprise Fischer stood in the place where the woman and child should have been. He propelled his heaving frame into the slender entryway, and threw a malicious smile down in Caesar's direction.

At around 55 mph, Mike Jeffrey drove his green Chevy Van towards the highway on its way to Southern California. His cargo of immigrants banged together violently, as he hit an unexpected Speed Bump. Apart from the rain outside, he was most pleased with the time he was making, as his wristwatch said 10:30, and he wasn't scheduled to leave until 11. In reverie, Mike fantasized about the five hundred bucks he's going to make for handing over all these cheap laborers to his dad. He turned on the windshield wiper and imagined his dad respecting him more; possibly giving him more responsible jobs like this in the future. Mike lit up a smoke, and took a quick look in the glove compartment to make sure everything was secure.

"Looking pretty goddamn good!"

In the rear of the van, Caesar tried to be in good spirits with his new friends. With embarrassment, he still remembered leaving McDonald's, and Señor Martinez. Thankfully, that whole affair was now over with, and Caesar could look with anticipation and hope towards the future. He was to be a strawberry picker, and though he was now only a homeless young boy, a new friend in the van had guaranteed him a place with some relatives in California. Caesar was excited about the



move, and the opportunity to see other states in America. On his knees, he gazed with interest from the back window of the Chevy, and watched the rain.

There appeared to be some kind of black jeep with a very long radio antenna directly behind them. The sun came, and illuminated outlines in the jeep. It created a kind of rainbow screen, and Caesar could only see what the sun and rain allowed him to see. The light from the sun made Caesar very lazy. Approaching a railroad track, the Chevy stalled, allowing a freight train to pass. Immediately after the Chevy stopped, the black jeep disclosed its flashing lights. Four men withdrew from the vehicle, led by a dog on a leash. They surrounded the green Chevy; searching the driver's seat first, before bringing Mike back into the jeep hand-cuffed. Caesar watched the whole scene unfold with a detached admiration for the professional air that these men upheld as they continued to execute each one of their assignments. It wasn't until the back door of the Chevy was flung open, and he was personally being manhandled by an officer, that the severity of the situation finally sunk in.

"Do you know anything about the Marijuana?"

Caesar looked at the officer as if he had just been struck. He felt his heart begin to sink, as the officer stared back at him through sunglasses that veiled all emotion.

"You gonna talk, son? Some of your other Mexican friends 'fessed up to the whole thing. They agreed that they were trafficking this stuff with homeboy over there." He pointed over at Mike in the jeep. Caesar still couldn't find any words.

"Fine. You be like that, poncho."

Before Caesar could begin to move, the officer quickly handcuffed Caesar's hands behind his back and threw him to



the ground. Caesar tried to struggle back to his feet, but the officer kicked him down again. Caesar winced in pain from the kick. He wasn't sure if he had cracked a rib. A tear escaped his eye and rolled to the dirt.

"Your going to wait right here until we come back. No movement. Understand?"

The officers loaded the rest of the immigrants into the jeep. After quickly checking that everything was in its proper place, the officers boarded themselves; promptly backing their vehicle away from Caesar, and then turning back from whence they came to vanish hastily up the road.

Caesar writhed in his uncomfortable confinement. He was still on the road, so he quickly jerked himself up onto the sidewalk, just in the nick of time for the next car to pass. When he had collapsed, he found the side of his nose perfectly perpendicular with an iron rail. He recognized it as the railroad tracks. For the moment, Caesar had no choice. He continued staring at the tracks, as another train passed him by.



Miranda Wieck

I have never been very inspired by trains. I like them well enough. I even sometimes get a picture in my head of Jesse James lighting a cigarette in the dining car, seated a row or two back from Calamity Jane. But trains don't inspire me.

I once took a train ride to Denver, Colorado. It was a long ride and the fields of cows seemed to go on forever. I spent the last couple hours of the ride in the observation car, singing old gospel songs with some people I'd met.

During my week in Denver, I met a boy. I don't remember much about him. He was one of those non-descript nice, sort of interesting but not interesting enough to remember kind of guys. After I returned home, we exchanged letters for a while. In the letters, I learned more about his schizophrenia and health problems than I did about him. I was introduced to his particular person who was not there, named Louis. Another non-descript.

After a while, the letters stopped. I imagine he was institutionalized, died of heart complications, or achieved his ultimate dream of being a gutter punk (as opposed to being called a "house punk" by groups of homeless teenagers hanging out downtown, begging passers-by for five bucks "for a cheeseburger and a joint."). We had bonded over our love of vicodin and vodka, punk rock, and other self-destructive things, so none of this would surprise me.



A couple years later I took a train to Chicago. The car was built with the idea that it is comfortable to sit with your knees to your chest. When we arrived at the station, I discovered that the cheap little pizza shop that I had enjoyed in the station had closed a month earlier.

I spent the day wandering around, trying to find stage makeup. You see, the reason I was in Chicago was to attend a showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show, with an experienced shadow cast. They don't have such ungodly things in dear little west Michigan. The night of the show ended up being rather unmemorable. The usual fare was of course present: sexual innuendoes involving goats, young teenagers yelling obscenities at the screen, my booze being "confiscated" by a cast member at the door. Yawn.

Back on the train. I am once again in upright fetal position. Three hours home. Not enough time to sleep, not enough time to ignore the discomfort, plenty of time to hate every surrounding passenger.

I have never been inspired by trains.







Front cover by Miranda Wieck.  
Back cover by March Kane.

For additional copies, send drugs to:

Love Bunni Press  
2622 Princeton Rd  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118



